

Revelations by hoppingmad

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Summary:

Joyce doesn't have a date to prom. This leads to a rather interesting conversation between herself & Hopper.

Revelations

When Joyce was about ten years old and first learned what a prom was she had been sitting next to her best friend – Jimmy Hopper. She had turned to him and told him that they would be going together, they would, wouldn't they? He had quickly agreed – neither could imagine having to take a *date* to some dumb dance.

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She smiled bitterly at the memory. Oh, to be that naïve again. Here she was, two nights from Prom and not one guy had asked her. She didn't want to be *that* girl standing on the side of the hall, drinking spiked punch and being thrown pitiful glances.

Karen reckoned no-one had asked because they felt threatened by Jim. She couldn't quite understand it. Didn't everyone know they were only friends? They hadn't ever been in a relationship. Hopper would be taking Chrissy Carpenter, no doubt. He had always had a thing for the cheerleaders.

She tucked herself further beneath the bleachers, trying to avoid the cool breeze that had picked up since last period when she had first slunk down into her 'safe zone'... away from the prying eyes of her classmates. She had never been popular, but somehow everyone seemed to know that little Joyce Horowitz didn't have a date to prom. She groaned aloud as she pictured Karen's apologetic smile as they discussed it over lunch just an hour prior. Actually knowing Karen, she had probably been the one to spread the word.

The cold from the concrete was beginning to make her bum numb, but she couldn't find the energy to go back to class. She repositioned herself again, this time pulling her knees to her chest and trying to conserve some of heat. It was just as she stubbed out her current cigarette that she heard the sound of footsteps coming up between the bleachers. She was pretty sure it was Jim, but she was also pretty sure she didn't feel like being around him right now. Ultimately she knew that it wasn't his fault she hadn't been asked to prom, but a part of her still felt angry. Why did he have to always stick up for her? Always be right beside her when a guy caught her eyes?

“Thought I might find you here.” She glanced up at his familiar face and let out a frustrated sigh.

“Yeah, you found me.” She muttered. He held onto the pole above his head and swung down to sit beside her.

“What’s up? You look miserable.”

“Oh don’t play coy!” She shuffled further away from him. “Everyone knows.” She turned to him, hoping the anger in her eyes would hurt him – just a little.

“Uh,” he looked utterly confused and advice her mom had once given her (before she up and left) came hurtling back. *Boys don’t see things the way we ladies do, you have to spell it out for them.*

“I’m not going to prom.” Her friends eyes widened, he tugged a cigarette from a crumpled packet he had pulled from his shirt pocket.

“Why not? I swear you haven’t stopped talking about it for your entire life.”

“Are you really that stupid?” She ran a frustrated hand over her face, not caring that she was probably smearing her mascara. “No-one has asked me. No guy will come near me because everyone thinks of me as *yours*.” They sat in silence for a while, not their usual comfortable silence – it was heavy with emotion as she tried to stem back the flow of tears she had been holding onto for days.

“People think we are dating?” Jim asked dumbly.

“I don’t know, but you intimidate them.”

“I do not!”

“Yes you DO.” She jammed her finger into his chest, wishing with all her might that he would just *get it*, and maybe do something about it. She desperately wanted to be at prom, she wanted to walk in with her best friend Karen and her boyfriend John but she wanted to be on the arm of a guy, any guy, at this stage she would even settle for Bob the brain!

“Well I don’t mean to.” Jim’s voice had quietened, and he looked sad. “You should still go.” He tells her firmly. “I’ll dance with you, you know that!”

He probably would. There hadn’t been a single disco, dance or any social event that he hadn’t stepped in and danced with her. When she looked back at previous events, it was always him. She felt a lump rise to her throat, and she coughed trying to clear it.

“Joyce?” She felt him move closer, felt his warmth and the scent of him waft over her. She allowed him to pull her over and she rested her head on his chest, as she sat in his arms something dawned on her. *All* her memories involved him. After prom, after high school finished... what if he and Chrissy moved? What if he was no longer in Hawkin’s? What happened when they married other people, would their friendship survive?

“Jim,” she turned her face towards him, knowing she was vulnerable in bringing it up – but suddenly unable to keep the thoughts to herself. “What happens after this, after we finish school. What happens to us?”

“I’ll always be here for you.” He states simply.

“What if...” she trails off, like a lightening bolt had struck her she pulls away from his chest and turns to face him fully. She drags her eyes from his messy dark blonde mop of hair, right down to the worn jeans and ugly brown jacket he refused to throw away.

“What if, what?” He looks at her, confused. She loves that face, the ‘confused’ face he does... he draws his eyebrows together and cocks his head to the left a little.

Loves.

Shit.

Did she love James Hopper?

“I have to go.” She stands up quickly, glad for once to be short as she missed banging her head on the bleachers above by mere millimetres.

“Wait, Joyce!” She has already climbed onto the stairs and the urge to run kicks in. She must get out of here. She had started the day depressed she didn’t have a date to prom, and now she had a opened a whole other can of worms.

She runs now, letting Jim’s voice fade into the distance. She doesn’t look back, just heads straight for the bike racks. She would go home; her dad wouldn’t care if she told him she was sick.

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Once she had arrived home she realised her mistake. The bike ride had cleared her head, but now sitting in her room the sound of the television faintly coming through the wall she felt restless. How could she sit still after she had come to such a massive revelation?

Jim would *never* love her. Well, not in the way she loved him. He didn’t find her attractive, how could he?

She wracked her brain, trying to figure out if he had ever showed signs of liking her. Did they ever discuss their feelings for each other? She couldn’t remember. Maybe as kids... but over the age of thirteen? Not really.

She did remember one awkward party where she had gotten entirely to drunk and he had walked her home. He had helped her into bed and sat beside her, rubbing her back and stroking back her hair and he had gently kissed her on the forehead. Was that a sign? Or was that just him being kind, being a good best friend...?

She spent hours agonising over her memories, but she must have eventually fallen asleep as she woke to the sound of pebbles hitting her window.

“Hopper,” she hissed out the window. “What are you doing?” She glanced nervously behind her, half expecting her dad to have heard and woken up.

“Come outside!” He called softly. She pulled herself back through the window into her bedroom and shut it tightly. For the first time in all the time she had known him she quickly rushed to the bathroom to

check her appearance. She had a weird crease on her face where she must have laid on something, and her fringe was sticking up... after flicking a little water on her hair and brushing it down she rubbed a hand over her face, and then smoothed down her clothes before sneaking out the back door.

“Took you long enough.” Jim said jokingly. She felt herself blush and was glad for the darkness.

“Sorry,” she tried to sound calm, but she was suddenly so aware of every inch of her body. Was she standing too close? Too far away? Shit. This was weird.

“Want to go for a walk?” He gestured to the street and she nodded. She was proud to say that when he companionably bumped her arm with his, she didn’t even flinch.

“So I was thinking, maybe we should just go to prom together?” She stopped walking altogether at his words.

“What?” Her voice was high and unnatural and he stopped a few feet ahead of her, turning around in confusion.

“Okay, this is getting weird. Joyce what is *wrong* with you?” He closed the distance between them, clutching her arms in his hands.

“It’s just...” she sighs. She had to be honest with him. He would see through any lie she came up with. “Do you think I’m pretty?”

“Of course,” she could see him frowning, the street light illuminating his face.

“Why haven’t you asked me out?” She watched as a blush rose to her friend’s cheeks, and she felt her own cheeks redden once more.

“You mean – like on a date?”

“No, yes... I don’t know...” She shook her head, suddenly confused.

“I thought it would ruin our friendship.” He tells her, he seemed to be still trying to wrap his head around how their conversation had turned to this.

“But you think I’m pretty?” She asks again.

“You are the most beautiful girl I have ever met.” He steps away from her and rubs a hand over his face. “Shit, this changes everything, doesn’t it? I’m sorry.” She stares up at him, confused. What was he apologising for?

“What are you sorry for?”

“I... well...” it was then that he did that adorable little head-tilt thing he does when he’s confused and she let out a nervous giggle, breaking the tension a little.

“This is so awkward.”

“It really is.”

“I’m glad you think I’m pretty, does that help?” She asks.

“Yeah it does.” He answers, he lets out a big sigh as if he had been holding his breath. “So this thing... it’s not one-sided?” He asks, and she finally knows why he was apologising.

“Oh, no – no!” She grabs his free hand and their hands mesh together as they always have, this time she gives him a gentle squeeze. “I was asking you because I think...” she trails off, this is a big one. She’s actually never said these words before and she doesn’t want to sound like an idiot. “I think I’m in love with you.” The words come out entirely too rushed and it takes a bit for them to sink in, she watches as he processes her words and she can literally see the moment it does. His entire face lights up.

“Fuck, Joyce!” Suddenly she is up in the air, and he is spinning her around. “This is...” he puts her on the ground, apologising as she tries to steady herself. The world is still spinning a little when his hands appear on either side of her face. “Are you sure?” He asks, suddenly serious.

“Of course, shut up and kiss me already.” And so he does. When they finally stop kissing she finds her back against the lamp post and she doesn’t remember moving her feet at all. She feels warm all over and her heart feels as though it’s going to beat right out of her chest.

“I guess this solves the prom problem.” She says as they wander back to her house, her hand still tightly entwined with his.

“I’m looking forward to it.”

As they reach her house she stops him, and tugs gently on his hand. “Hey, you never said *it*...”

“Said what?” Oh for fucks sake, boys really were stupid. “Wait – wait, just teasing you.” He smiles, and leans down pressing a soft kiss to her lips, and then to the crown of her head. “I love you Joyce Horowitz, I always have and I always will.”

Author's Note:

So I know this seems sappy and ends well... but it kind of made me sad to write. Clearly this isn't how it went, or if it did – something went seriously wrong in the middle for Joyce to end up with Lonnlie.
shudder